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# THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL JOURNAL

*Continuing "The Elementary School Teacher"*

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## Educational News and Editorial Comment

### EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS IN THE SOUTHERN STATES

From three of the southern states that have been slow in their development of public education come evidences of a vigorous awakening in regard to the importance of education. The last legislature of the state of Alabama provided for a survey to be made of the educational system of that state. The report of the survey commission which was organized by the Commissioner of Education of the United States was presented directly to the legislature and will be the basis of important modifications in the Alabama system. It is reported on good authority that the probabilities are very large that the Alabama system will be organized

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throughout on the six-three-three plan, that compulsory education will be re-enacted in a much more vigorous form than heretofore in that state, and that larger revenues will be provided.

The governor of the state took a vigorous stand with regard to the demands made by the surveyors. Two of his recommendations are worthy of special comment, the first relating to the organization of the state department, and the second with regard to funds for the operation of the schools. His statements are as follows:

The responsibility for the conduct of the State Department of Education should be taken from the shoulders of one man and placed upon laymen of proved ability such as compose the Alabama Education Commission. The office of State Superintendent of Education should be removed from politics and from the imputation of organized succession and ring domination. Other states have blazed the trail; the way has been charted; a state council of education for the co-ordination and direction of the work, of the three institutions of higher learning and a state board of education to have direction and oversight of the other state educational agencies are the sure means by which to avoid duplication and waste and to insure a businesslike, efficient, and progressive supervision of our educational enterprises—enterprises of the greatest magnitude, of the largest financial outlay, and of the most powerful possibilities.

Along with new machinery must come more money. The budget commission and the recess committee on finance and taxation could not see their way clear in the light of the State's financial condition to provide all the funds required to meet the conservative claims for additional revenue made by the Alabama Education Commission. The sincere desire of the budget commission and the committee and their great faith in the willingness of the people through you, their agents, to respond to the needs of the new day in Alabama are reflected in the appropriation of \$1,000,000 from the general fund to the public schools and in the modest increases to the parts of our school system which you are asked to make.

Let me repeat, the provision of more revenue is the unalterable condition of progress in education, as well as in the other lines of improvement which I am recommending. It is my calm and deliberate judgment that the people of Alabama and of the world were never so conscious as now of the intrinsic worth of education and were never more ready to enter upon a widening career of development in field, factory, forest, and mine; that this can only come through free, universal education.

It is noteworthy also that the argument presented by the Alabama Survey Commission reflects the same estimate of education that is presented in the governor's message. The report puts before the people of Alabama at some length the arguments for an improved educational system that grow out of the economic necessi-

ties of modern life. Alabama has not developed its agriculture or its manufacturing resources as fully as it might because its school system has been deficient. For purely selfish reasons, therefore, it is desirable that the recommendations of the commission should be carried out so as to give the state a better scheme of education.

The state of Virginia has recently gone through a survey somewhat more elaborate than the survey of Alabama, and it is confidently expected that as a result of this survey a new educational code will be enacted in that state. The details of the survey are not at hand and will not be published until the report is made in full to the state officials.

The legislature of Georgia has also enacted new legislation which is progressive in type. The new legislation is especially interesting in this case because it brings to light the antiquated and entirely inefficient system of taxation which is one of the serious drawbacks in the organization of school systems in the southern states. The *Atlanta Constitution* publishes a long article reviewing the action of the Georgia legislature. The following paragraphs set forth the matter of school taxation in a very illuminating way:

The educational legislation just written into the statutes of this state by the Georgia general assembly is so thorough and progressive and of such importance to every home in the state as to make it advisable to give full information as to its contents and value. Knowing the general interest of *Constitution* readers, I shall endeavor to analyze the various measures.

The local tax bill or, as it is more generally called, the "Elders-Carswell measure," because it was introduced by Senator H. H. Elders in the senate and Representative George H. Carswell in the house—this is an amendment to the state constitution of 1877 and therefore must be ratified by the voters at the next general election before it can become a law.

It is the close of a long struggle on the part of the educational forces of the state against the restriction placed on public education by the framers of the Georgia constitution. At that time Georgia was aristocratic in its conception of education and while the "fathers" of blessed memory were willing to educate their own children, they were not so sure about the wisdom of training the boys and girls of "Tom, Dick and Harry." As a consequence, while nearly all the states of the Union in their constitutions laid down the proviso that each county must tax itself before it could receive state aid, the constitution of Georgia on the contrary said you shall not be allowed to tax yourself for public schools except under circumstances of the greatest difficulty; hence it required recommendations of different grand juries and two-thirds vote even before the measure was allowable.

Four large counties, Bibb, Chatham, Richmond, and Glynn, saved themselves at the time by special reservation from the educational provisions of the state

constitution. The rest of the state was left chained and only the larger cities and towns secured a measure of freedom through independent local laws. The framers of the constitution even went so far as to try to cast a slur upon the very name and styled them "common," where other states have used the term "public" schools. The new code just passed uses the phrase "common or public" to get the verbiage more in accordance with modern usage.

Through independent local laws and in spite of the constitutional restrictions, some eighty-five cities and towns and sixty-seven entire counties have secured the right to maintain schools by local taxation. The Elders-Carswell bill will not affect any of these, but merely seeks to give the rest of the state the right to use taxation instead of tuition fees—the only modern business way of maintaining schools.

This somewhat inadequate treatment of the problem of taxation represents genuine progress but leaves much to be desired even yet. Some of the other items of legislation reported in the same article are somewhat more hopeful. The following may be quoted:

The weakest point in any system of education is always in the thinly settled rural field. To overcome this and give the rural child a fair chance, laws for consolidation and transportation were passed in 1911. This legislature, however, has gone two steps further. Through a bill introduced by Senator Fermor Barrett in the senate and Representative Z. B. Rogers in the house, a direct inducement is offered to those thinly scattered rural schools to combine, and wherever they do so to the extent of at least four teachers with a four-room building, \$500 annually is given them from the state treasury. If in addition they will employ at least two more teachers for the high school, they are given \$500 extra.

To meet this, the state school superintendent is authorized to set aside \$100,000 from public school funds, in order to foster and encourage the very best type of teaching in those sections.

A measure for the training of subnormal children was passed. The figures show that about 3 per cent of the population of every state is subnormal or mentally deficient. A large percentage of our criminal population comes from this class. Commonly, they have been left without educational training and yet it is well established that particularly through industrial work, they can be materially aided to become an asset instead of a liability to the community.

An illiteracy commission of ten was created with the governor and state school superintendent as ex-officio members. The remainder are appointed by the governor with no salaries for anyone for this work. They are given as a nucleus, the balance of the funds appropriated for the state council of defense amounting to about \$12,000.

It is hoped that good citizens will aid, so that a large sum may be raised for giving training in every county in the state to those men and women who have passed beyond school age and are still unable to read and write. It is hoped, also, that through this, much may be done to lessen adult illiteracy before the census is taken next year.

A new law requires that all public school buildings must be constructed in accordance with plans provided by the state or local boards of education. This

will prevent the old shoe box structure put up in so many communities without reference to light or breathing space, and also the architectural monstrosities which stand in so many places as monuments to the ignorance of some man, or set of men, who believed a school could be a shanty.

To meet this law, the state department of education has already arranged to provide plans and blue-prints for all rural schools of from one to four rooms, and these are by the unit or latest modern type. Architects must be provided by local boards to erect buildings larger than four rooms.

#### SUMMER WORK FOR TEACHERS

The slight estimate which a good many people put on the professional pretensions of teachers comes to the surface from time to time in suggestions made for the compensation of members of our profession. Last winter the president of one of the leading universities of the United States brought down upon his own head a storm of protest because he said that professors ought to be appointed in colleges and universities with the explicit understanding that they would supplement their university incomes by other types of work, especially during the summer vacation. A man ought to be able, according to the statement thus given to the world, to supplement his salary in political economy by clerking in a bank during the summer, or he ought to be able to supplement his salary in the department of philosophy by preaching or engaging in some more lucrative occupation.

Now comes a similar proposal for teachers in high schools and elementary schools. It is suggested by a philanthropic group who realize the necessity of maintaining the schools of the United States, but through some form of subsidy other than drafts on the public purse. The *New York Call* reports a letter sent out by the Mayor's Committee of Women on Reconstruction and Relief of New York City. Miss Alice Carpenter, chairman of the employment committee, writes the following letter to induce teachers to take up the scheme:

There are always during the summer a number of public- and private-school-teachers who probably will be available, not as servants, but as home assistants—women who would be glad to live in, and to do housework in, homes, provided they did not lose caste by becoming servants. Many of these women have a good knowledge of cooking, and many would prove trustworthy in other directions. Such an innovation in their domestic arrangements on the part of American women would be going back to the days of our forefathers, when there was no servant class in America and the young daughters of good families went into the

homes of friends and neighbors and became loved and trusted members of the households which they entered.

If two home assistants are needed, the problem is easier because they become companions for each other. In one or two cases we know this has been successfully tried this summer. A young school-teacher from Brooklyn is cooking for a family of twelve in a lovely summer home, and is paid \$35 a month. A trained nurse wishing temporarily to change her occupation is housemaid, receiving \$25 a month in the same home. Both of these women eat their meals with the family and neither is considered as a servant, but as a regular member of the family. They do their work well and are paid considerably less than would be a member of the servant class. They can afford to do this because they are doing the work in their vacations and so are earning extra money.

Comment is hardly necessary on such a proposal as this. It is interesting to get, however, two or three of the human reactions which the *New York Call* adds to this statement of the letter. The following are two of these statements:

Why on earth should a teacher go and cook for a family of twelve for \$35 a month, when a good cook can easily get from \$60 to \$80 a month in a family of four or five? As for going in pairs, that doesn't appeal to me at all. Why waste the moonlight nights in that lovely summer home strolling or canoeing with another girl? After cooking and serving dinner for fourteen, and washing, wiping, and putting away the fourteen sets of dishes and so forth, I should want some more stimulating recreation than exchanging views with the teacher-housemaid.

I really could not indorse the plan unless it were extended to the men teachers. I should want the butler to be a professor of romance languages or a political economist, who could explain to me the relation of China to the League of Nations, to refresh my mind in the evenings after my exertions in feeding the family and being one of them.

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As a teacher, a worker, I do not care to scab on any other group of workers. That is what the teacher would be doing if she went to do housework for so much less money than a regular servant would get. It seems to me that if the public-school teachers are getting such poor salaries that they have to work during their summer vacations in order to make ends meet, New York City had better keep quiet about it and not spread the fact abroad.

The whole discussion belongs to an era when teaching was not a profession but a side issue. There was a time when all of the young men who intended to be lawyers taught school for a little time in order to save the money necessary to study law. It has not yet gone out of fashion for young women who are waiting for a final solution of their careers to teach school for a short period. It is hardly to be wondered at that the passing generation thinks of teaching in terms of mere transient employment. There ought

to be a vigorous campaign, not merely to increase salaries of teachers, but to persuade the public that the duties of a teacher require the type of training that has developed teaching into a profession. No one will then suggest that a meagerly paid teacher who has spent years in acquiring a professional equipment ought to spend his summer vacation cooking in somebody's kitchen, clerking, or driving somebody's motor car, for the necessary pittance to complete his livelihood. Again let us reiterate the statement, "Overemphasis on the necessity of a few dollars of income has blinded the public to the real fact which is that teaching has become a profession, at least in those quarters where it is properly carried out."

#### THE COST OF SCHOOLBOOKS

The following item clipped from the *Chicago Evening Post* sets forth in the style in which the public gets much of its information about schools a situation which is in reality a very serious one for the schools:

It's going to cost more to start Willie to school next month than it did last October, for—

The price of schoolbooks is going up, unless—

Well, here's the situation:

State Superintendent of Schools Blair has notified the Chicago Board of Education that the schoolbook law of 1917 still stands and that prices of books in 1917 should be continued until 1922, under the contract of the state with the publishers.

The book publishers have notified the school board that the prices of schoolbooks have been increased since July 1, 1919. As regards the contract of 1917, the publishers say that that agreement is merely "unilateral," and, therefore, void. "A one-sided contract cannot be enforced," say the publishers.

"You can just bet your last dollar that the school children of Chicago will be protected," said Edwin S. Davis, president of the school board.

"I have not looked into the matter as yet and I cannot say at this time what legal action the Chicago school board may have against the book publishers, if they insist on raising the price of schoolbooks," said Attorney William A. Bither of the school board. "I am informed the publishers say the 1917 contract, as embodied in the state law of that date, is unilateral and cannot be enforced. The matter probably will come up at the meeting of the school board next Wednesday."

In his statement from Springfield, State Superintendent Blair says the listing of 1917 stands for five years and that failure of the publishers to seek relief at the last session of the general assembly bars them from changing prices at this time.



He says the state will enforce the law and calls the attention of the county school superintendents to the fact that the only "legal" list of prices is that published by the state superintendent in 1917.

Frank F. Hummel, secretary of D. C. Heath & Co., book publishers, said the general interpretation on the part of the publishers on the 1917 Illinois book law committed the school superintendents to the use for five years of the textbooks selected under this law. He said that while manufacturing costs had increased nearly 100 per cent since 1917, his company was proposing to stick to the 1917 prices on all books adopted, but such prices did not apply to new books.

A representative of Houghton, Mifflin & Co., who declined to be quoted, said his company was preparing to increase the selling price of schoolbooks about 10 per cent and await a court ruling on the 1917 law.

O. C. Newhouse, president of the Atlas School Supply Company, a distributing house, said that, while the prices of books to the distributor had been increased about 20 per cent, his company is planning to open bookstores opposite all the Chicago high schools this year and sell direct to the students at a price lower than that of last year. He charged the bookstore keepers with profiteering.

From Ohio comes the report that the book companies have secured an official ruling that they are not bound in the fourth and fifth years of their contract to maintain the price established for the first year.

Last fall at the request of the book companies Commissioner Claxton held a conference. One of the chief topics of discussion at that time was the circle in which the makers of books were caught by virtue of the fact that they cannot raise prices in one state without affecting their prices in other states. Thus the law in one state calls for a price as low as that given to any other customer, and since the periods of adoption in different states differ, the book companies find no point at which they can break the circle.

The situation is one in which the fact must be faced that legislation has in many cases been passed in a spirit unfriendly to the book companies. There is in many quarters suspicion amounting to fixed distrust of the companies, and the laws passed in various states reflect this attitude. The sources of this distrust are not difficult to locate. The plan of merchandising schoolbooks through the elaborate system of agencies now in existence is difficult to accept as legitimate. Book men are so numerous in the various states and they congregate in such numbers and display such unbounded hospitality wherever teachers are gathered in their meetings that the uncomfortable feeling arises that book agents are supported by a system that is extravagant, to say the least. Not only so, but there are forms of book agenting which, while they fall

within the law, look uncanny. For example, it is reported on the best of authority that before the Indiana adoption last spring, a well-known company took temporarily into its agency staff, at a very high fee, an attorney who lives in the same town with a member of the state board. Furthermore, it is a well-known fact that preparation for the Indiana adoption sent its roots far back into school appointments and the politics of educational associations. These cases which are typical of many experiences in many states lead to the feeling that the system of selling schoolbooks in this country is not controlled by considerations of public good to the extent to which it should be. Consequently there come drastic and in some cases irrationally repressive laws passed in a spirit of revenge or suppression.

All this is deplorable. Schoolbooks are essential to our schools. They have been brought to a high level of mechanical perfection, and their content is improving, and is now superior to the content of schoolbooks of any other country. The book companies which have done this have a right to a fair profit. On the other hand, the public has a right to full knowledge of the transactions of these companies. If they are as public-minded as they seem, they ought at once to move in the direction of a type of public audit similar to that which establishes and maintains public confidence in national banks and insurance companies. It is not desirable that unfriendly or confiscatory laws should be passed. It is very desirable that absolutely full publicity be given to the operations of schoolbook companies. They are public service corporations of the first importance. They should be conducted as such. Their expenditures should be published in full, and then the public will know exactly what books cost and why. Publicity of the type here advocated would remove all grounds for suspicion and would cure at one stroke the attitude which is back of many of the present state textbook laws.

#### AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

The American Federation of Teachers has had a phenomenal growth during the last nine months. It had late in July more than a hundred locals, and it is the prediction of its officers that within the next fifteen months it will have five times the present number.

This organization is a branch of the American Federation of Labor, and in its organization is patterned on the labor unions of

which it becomes one through this affiliation. Its purpose is clearly stated as the protection of teachers through concerted effort to increase salaries, to compel school systems to organize teachers' councils, to reduce the size and number of classes, to simplify and improve systems of rating teachers, and to secure the enactment of the Towner bill.

There came into the hands of the writer a letter written by the national organizer to a group of teachers who were being invited to join the federation. The following paragraphs are the ones in which the purpose of the federation is clearly revealed:

What is the situation which confronts the teachers of America? We are in some respects the most highly educated group of people in the country; we certainly perform as important work as is done; yet we receive the lowest financial returns and have the least voice in determining the conditions of our work. We are in fact subject to a form of economic oppression and intellectual repression.

What is the explanation of this situation? We teachers have been individualists. We have been working in the classroom apart from the real world, in the realm of adolescence. We have been working in the classroom apart from our fellow-workers. We have not learned to work together. As a group, it can hardly be said that we have developed either a business or a collective sense. We have not learned how to help ourselves or to help one another. We have either been unorganized or organized into the form of pedagogical associations. These associations have been made up in large part of people who do not vote. Even if they did, they would not constitute a sufficient proportion of the voters in any given community to get results. Now our salaries and school laws depend upon political bodies whose membership and policies in turn depend upon the voters. Hence our present condition.

What is the remedy? There is only one way out, and that is to build up a nation-wide, business, protective, and educational organization of the teachers of the country as embodied in the American Federation of Teachers affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.

The federation is a fact the importance of which cannot be overlooked. It grows out of a widespread feeling on the part of teachers that they are not getting a fair deal. It grows out of the fact also that there is no general and effective organization of teachers in this country.

Yet, while one can understand the reason for the spread of the federation, one must pause before accepting it as either a necessary or wholesome solution of the problems of professional life in the schools.

Take for example one of the cardinal principles accepted in determining eligibility to membership. The federation deliberately

excludes from membership superintendents and supervisory officers of minor grade. Just as the head barber or the boss in any working gang is excluded from the union, so the supervisor is excluded from the benefits of protection in the federation. The inevitable result is a division within the professional group charged with the responsibility of conducting schools. Such a division is not in the interests of the schools as a whole; it is in the interests of the teachers. In one city where the federation has long been firmly established, it is a well-known fact that principals do not dare give a low rating to teachers who belong to the federation. There is evidently here a disposition to make the rating system very "simple."

The federation ought, in the interest of schools, to be totally eclipsed by a truly professional organization broad enough in its membership and interests to subordinate all class efforts to a general movement in favor of efficient schools. There is very little prospect of the broadening of the federation to serve the widest educational interests of the country.

In this connection we may quote again from the letter of the national organizer, L. V. Lampson, above referred to. He is evidently aware that objections will be raised. He meets these objections. The level of argument reached in answering them makes the student of education very restless about the further doings of the federation. The quotation is as follows:

Now there are certain objections which you will want to consider and settle to your own satisfaction before forming a union. One of these is that teachers belong to a profession and therefore should not affiliate with organized labor. Union teachers feel that they are employees and can therefore properly affiliate upon this economic basis, if upon no other, with the other employed people of the country. In view of the pitiable compensation of the teachers and their lack of voice in determining matters of educational concern, they do not belong to a calling in which the conditions of a real profession exist. It is the object of the American Federation of Teachers to bring about such a change in the conditions that affect teachers as to make teaching a career for strong men and women.

Another objection is that it would be undignified for the teachers to affiliate with organized labor. Union teachers feel that taking the teachers of the country as a whole they have very little dignity to lose. No group of people have any dignity in the real sense who are unable to protect themselves. Of all people those least able to protect themselves are the teachers of the country. The facts are that we have not been accorded that respect whether measured in terms of money or public regard to which the character and value of the services which we render justly entitle us.

A third possible objection is that of the strike. To union teachers, this objection has no weight whatsoever because they are cognizant of the fact that the

American Federation of Labor grants to the American Federation of Teachers a charter of complete autonomy. No labor organization can call us out on a strike, sympathetic or otherwise. The American Federation of Teachers does not endorse the strike as a means of getting results but depends upon publicity, organization, and political action. There have been no strikes among the union teachers. There have been several this year among non-union teachers.

A fourth possible objection is that the teachers are employees of the public and therefore should not affiliate with any particular group or class. Theoretically, this is a sound argument but practically it does not stand the test of facts. The American Federation of Labor is not a class labor organization. It is neither socialistic nor bolshevistic. Now the socialist would do away with the employer by constitutional means and the bolshevist would eliminate him by revolutionary measures. The American Federation of Labor, however, believes in co-operation between the employer and the employee. It is regarded as the strongest bulwark in the country against the extreme, revolutionary, and bolshevistic labor movements of Europe. Labor leaders welcome the teachers into their organization as a further steadying influence in the ranks of labor. In this connection, it should be stated that such a thing as coercion of union teachers by organized labor is utterly unknown. The fundamental principle of the American Labor Movement is the autonomy of its locals and the freedom of its members.

The case could not be more clearly stated than in the first sentences in which Mr. Lampson comments on what he calls the fourth objection. It is indubitably true that if teachers align themselves with any class in the community, they lose their professional position and curtail their ability to teach children in a broad, impartial way those democratic principles which transcend class and are the true foundations of American life.